

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Don Nickles, Chairman

We oppose the deeming provisions in this bill for several reasons. First, it is unfair to change the rules in the middle of the game. The sponsors of hundreds of thousands of legal immigrants who are now in the country understood when they agreed to be sponsors that deeming would not apply to Medicaid. It is not fair to say that they will henceforth be legally responsible for the medical care of those immigrants. Second, we all know that immigrants who are denied Medicaid will not go to their sponsors for medical treatment--they will go to State and local welfare programs. Third, the Federal Government requires emergency treatment to be given to any legal alien who walks into a hospital. If that alien and his sponsor then refuse to pay, and if the Federal Government refuses to pay, the hospitals will be left with the bill. Fourth, some immigrants who have medical problems that pose a threat to public health, such as tuberculosis or syphilis, will simply not seek any treatment if they are denied Medicaid. For these reasons we think that the deeming requirements for Medicaid in this bill should be eliminated, and the more moderate provisions of the Graham amendment should be accepted in their stead.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

Sooner or later we think our colleagues are going to come to the realization that a majority of Senators definitely do not think that aliens should be allowed to go on welfare if they have been let into the country on their promises and their sponsors' promises that they will never go on welfare. For more than 100 years the law has been that sponsors must provide support when needed, but courts have gutted that law. This bill will restore it. If someone gives his or her word that they will see to the needs of an immigrant rather than letting that immigrant go on welfare, and when that immigrant is only let in the country because of that promise, that promise should be binding. It should not be binding for cash assistance, food assistance, education assistance, legal assistance, and all other forms of assistance except medical assistance. We see no logical reason why sponsors should be allowed to break their word when it comes to this one area. To the extent a sponsor is able to pay, that sponsor should be forced to pay, and that is what this bill will require. When a sponsor is unable to provide support an immigrant will be entitled to Medicaid, but not before. The American taxpayers should not be made to foot the bill. We have enough needy Americans in this country already without importing more to take care of when their sponsors lie about their willingness to provide support. We therefore strongly urge the rejection of the Graham amendment.